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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, INF/AF
PRETORIA FOR ORA, DATT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: DISCONTENT WITH PRIME MINISTER RISING WITHIN GOVERNING PARTY
AND SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

REF: A. Maseru 261 B. Gaborone 702

CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth C. Power, Deputy Chief of Mission.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Minister of Communications Mothetjoa Metsing, who is also the governing Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) Secretary General, expressed his concerns to Ambassador Nolan about Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili's decision not to retire at the end of his current term and his "dictatorial" behavior in keeping a tight rein on party activities. In a separate conversation, the South African High Commissioner relayed similar concerns about Mosisili and stated that South Africa is convinced that political violence in Lesotho is a question of "when, not if." END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On November 12, Metsing requested a meeting with the Ambassador, wanting to discuss his concerns about Mosisili's authoritarian control over all LCD party activities. Metsing described Mosisili's unwillingness to consider any discussion with the opposition, whether it be over the disputed allocation of proportional representation seats in the 2007 elections or over any other issue. Metsing stated that despite his position as LCD Secretary General, he has never been consulted by Mosisili about party policy or activities; instead, Mosisili appears to receive guidance and support from hardliners in the party such as Minister of Local Government Pontso Sekatle. This reliance on Sekatle and others who encourage the Prime Minister's distance from the opposition parties has caused factions within the cabinet, and Metsing feels that he is being sidelined. He claims that he and others would like to seek some means of dialogue and rapprochement with the opposition, and that he has also sought some collaboration from contacts within South Africa's African National Congress party on party leadership development, but these efforts have been stymied.

13. (C) In the Ambassador's separate conversation with South African High Commissioner Happy Mahlangu on December 1, very similar concerns were raised. Mahlangu stated that the Mosisili is too authoritarian, noting that his unwillingness to engage and compromise with the political opposition has raised the South African government's (SAG) concerns about increased potential for political violence; the SAG now feels that such violence is a matter of "when, not if." Mosisili had sought a state visit from newly elected South African President Jacob Zuma earlier in the year, but the South Africans decided that Mosisili had to resolve the internal dispute with the opposition over the 2007 elections first. Mahlangu said that South Africa will intervene militarily in Lesotho if it has to, but this time, South Africa will not take sides and will simply act to restore civil order. (Note: In 1998, South Africa's military came in specifically to support the GOL in a conflict with the political opposition. End note.)

14. (C) COMMENT: Metsing is viewed as a rising star within the LCD, and the young, energetic politician seems to have a solid base of public support. His discontent may be motivated in part

by his own political interest, but his comments about the Prime Minister taking a hard line with the opposition coincide with those of Foreign Minister Kenneth Tsekoa during the August 2009 stay away, and are therefore quite credible (ref A). Mahlangu's comments about South Africa's perceptions of Lesotho are concerning, as on the surface, the local political situation currently appears quite calm. South Africa's willingness to take a firm stance against Mosisili if necessary is only highlighted by the recent issue of SADC's AU presidency nomination going to Malawi instead of Lesotho, as had been originally planned (ref B).

POWER